

WESTMINSTER CHURCH
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 3B5

*“Trusting God, nurturing disciples for Christ,
being empowered by the Holy Spirit”*

July 24th, 2022

...We Gather to Worship God...

Call to Worship:

Praise your name for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,

For you have so exalted your solemn decree that it surpasses your fame.

When I called, you answered me; you greatly emboldened me.

May all the kings of the earth praise you, Lord, when they hear what you have decreed.

May they sing of the ways of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord is great.

Announcements: We are glad you are with us today and welcome your online voices joining with us.

Birthday Train: We have 3 special Birthday People this week. On July 25th, Bev Stewart, on July 26th, Brendan Wilson, and on July 27th Andrew Wilson! So feel free to send your well wishes this week and our prayers are for blessed and happy days for our Birthday celebrants this week!

Offerings and Tithes: Our Session would like to encourage our members and friends to prayerfully consider your contributions to our ongoing ministry here at Westminster. Contributions may be made in person, by mail, or by e-transfer to office@westminsterchurch.ca. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Hymn: 625 Seek ye first

Opening Prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, We seek and you offer. We ask and you give. We knock and you open the door.

Gracious God, you hear the requests of your people and in your goodness, you answer.

In Christ, you offer the gifts of new life and hope to all who seek your blessing.

Through your Spirit, you pray within us, even when we cannot find words ourselves.

Receive our praise and our prayers this day, Lord, and draw us into your holy presence, so that

your love will transform us to serve you in the world you love.

Faithful Father, quickly we forget the gifts we have received from your grace; instead of giving thanks, we ask for more.

We complain about what we lack and fail to trust your generosity. We refuse others the forgiveness we seek for ourselves. Forgive us, O God.

Transform our hearts and reshape our desires to reflect your goodness in the way we live.

We pray in Jesus name saying 'Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Amen.

...We Listen to God's Word...

Word of God:

Old Testament: 1 Samuel 1:1-18

New Testament: Luke 11:1-13

Hymn: 746 What a friend we have in Jesus

Message: "Praying like a drunk"

Worship is the strategy by which we interrupt our preoccupation with ourselves and attend to the presence of God. Worship is the time and place that we assign for deliberate attentiveness to God. (Peterson)

Praying like a drunk: Luke 11:1-13; 1 Samuel 1:1-18

The tale is told about a small town that had historically been "dry"...no alcohol allowed. A local businessman decided it was time to build a tavern in the town and he was the man to do it. A group of Christians from a local church were concerned and planned an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to intervene. It just so happened that shortly thereafter lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground. The owner of the bar sued the church, claiming that the prayers of the congregation were responsible for the destruction of his business. The church hired a lawyer to argue in court that they were not responsible. The presiding judge, after his initial review of the case stated, "no matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer, and the Christians do not"!

Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'

I guess I'm going to continue the approach I had with my last sermon on the Samaritan by not actually dealing with the Lord's Prayer and getting to the surrounding issues that we tend to pay less attention to, but are deeply important to understanding the message of the Samaritan or the Lord's prayer.

Just a couple of observations to make on the Lord's prayer that are for information. You may be wondering why some words are left out in Luke's gospel. Where for example is "and deliver us from evil"? And where is "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever"? Well, the gospel of Matthew has "and deliver us from evil", but neither have "for thine is the kingdom, power and glory forever" until much later translations. These words were added later likely by a zealous scribe who quotes from David's prayer to God in 1 Chronicles 29 where David says similar words:

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. (1 Chron. 29:11).

When the King James Version was created in 1611 they used a Greek manuscript that they believed was a true copy of the earliest manuscripts. In today's modern translations scholars go to the earliest copies of Greek texts with the assumption that words are more likely added in later copies by the scribes than taken away. So while the words aren't wrong they aren't scripture. And as to not using them in the Lord's Prayer...while tempted...I have other hills in ministry that I prefer to die on that this one.

I'd like to spend a bit more time in reflecting on what leads to this question from the disciples to Jesus about learning to pray "as John taught his disciples to pray". Now nowhere in the Bible do we see John teaching his disciples how to pray. But he did. And it seems that Jesus had been with his disciples -- some of whom remember, were also John's disciples-- a while without teaching them how to pray.

And on the surface, that's odd. I find myself thinking, "Um, isn't that the first thing one would teach one's disciples?" But somewhere along the line his disciples developed the desire to ask Jesus for something he seemed not yet to have offered. But Jesus is the master teacher and he waited until they saw something in his life that they wanted for themselves. So yes, they had seen great miracles done by Jesus. But I don't think that was the impetus for their question because I noted in my study that they themselves have already performed great miracles.

In Luke 9 the 12 disciples were sent out to drive out demons and heal diseases and proclaim the Kingdom of God. After the 12 went out, in Luke 10, 72 other followers were sent out to heal the sick and deliver people from evil spirits...remember the seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." So the disciples and the other followers had all been given the power and authority of Jesus. They had seen amazing miracles, a few of them had been with Jesus when he was transfigured and had seen him conversing with Elijah and Moses, the feeding of the 5,000 was just past...and they themselves were men and women of God given power and authority. And I note that the power went to some of their heads, in Luke 9 there is a brief reference to a small Samaritan village that put up opposition to helping Jesus and James and John said, *Lord should we call down fire from heaven upon them?* Now Jesus turns and rebukes them for this thought, but the implication is that they indeed had the godly power to do exactly this! So the disciples and followers knew their position in the

kingdom of God, they had been given the power and authority of the Kingdom of God, but I believe they sensed that something else was missing. They regularly observed Jesus drawing away from crowds, and from them, to spend time alone with his Father.

And they began to realize that a close relationship with God was something they believed they were missing and they came to Jesus to ask for a connection to the same relationship he had with his Father and he gives them the prayer to do it...the Lord's prayer...but the words after the prayer must have seemed troubling.

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

I know this section has always bothered me...why does Jesus seem to equate the silence of God with a man who can't be bothered getting out of a warm bed to give some bread to "a friend".

And the point is exactly the opposite. Jesus isn't saying the silence of God is like a lazy selfish neighbour, he's saying if you had a lazy selfish neighbour who was also a friend, one you'd helped time and time again, and you really needed his help for once, you'd pound on the door until he came to the door.

And I know this is the true understanding of this passage because then Jesus says, So I say to you...ask and you will receive...I want you to picture Jesus being quite earnest and even excited here as he says this to the disciples...So I say to you...ask and you will receive....Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks the door will be opened to him".

Author and Speaker Tony Campolo tells the story of his son asking him for the car. He says, His son does not come to him and say..."Oh though great Father, Lord of my Life, author of my existence, determiner of all things good that I have, I your unworthy and humble slave, do fearfully and quietly request of you, may I have use of your glorious transportation device, I so pray Lord and Master,...No, he says, his son comes in to the room and says, Hey dad, can I have the car? He asks in his position of beloved son.

This text is about the *position of prayer*, not of being on your knees, but the *position of your heart* to God. How do you understand your relationship with God? Is He on your side, or is he like the annoying neighbour or worse the useless father who would deny his son a piece of bread?

Persistence in prayer is necessary because for some reason I can't find my keys to the courtroom today, but my Father is in there, and he loves me, and he's dying to give me every good thing that I ask for....and so I, we, are to keep knocking on the door because it's God on the other side...it's

not the lazy neighbour friend...and God will answer our prayer.

Year, after year, after year Hannah prayed at the temple for a child. Year, after year, after year, her sister wife Peninnah tormented her, bullied her, slandered her. Finally, this year, Hannah cries out in anguish and weeping to God to answer her prayer, she's praying in silence to God with just her lips moving, she has no voice left, and Eli the priest thinks she's drunk and condemns her for praying in the temple in such an unworthy state. But today her persistence in prayer is answered with a promise from Eli that the Lord will answer her prayer. Her persistence in prayer, even her anguished pleading of the Lord bears fruit in a promise.

And look at what that promise means not just for her, but for us. She bears a son, and names him Samuel, and then that boy, her first born son who she prayed for for so very long, all the years, through all the trials of Peninnah's slanderous lips, that child she finally receives from God she gives to the temple as a young boy. And Samuel is instrumental in restoring the Priesthood from the shambles it had become under Eli and his sons. And Samuel is the one who anoints Saul as the first King of Israel, and Samuel is the one who anoints David as King in Saul's place, and David is the King whose later descendant is named Jesus Christ the Messiah. And our salvation in Jesus can be traced all the way back to Hannah's persistence in prayer.

Loved ones, never doubt that your Heavenly Father hears your prayers. Never doubt your position as his son/daughter. Never doubt your invitation through prayer to the ears of the King of the Universe. Never believe that persistence in prayer is meaningless or selfish or without purpose for you are praying to your Heavenly Father who only wants to give you good things.... 1 Corinthians 2:9 *'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.'*

Remember that your Heavenly Father wants to give you every good gift. Remember who He is, and remember who you are. So ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened unto you

...We Respond in Service...

Prayers of the People:

O God our help in ages past our hope for years to come hear the prayers of our hearts this morning. Father we pray for a new awareness of Your love to be made known in the deep recesses of our hearts.

There is never a time when we do not need to be reminded of our position in the centre of Your heart, so send Your Holy Spirit upon us now that we may experience the movement of Your love in our lives.

From generation to generation You have sought out, nurtured and cared for Your children. Seek us now. Pursue us with your relentless love and capture us in Your arms as Your Beloved Children.

We pray today for all those in the world far away and those close by in our families who do not know the depth of Your love for them in Christ. O Lord silence the distracting noise of the world so that Your still, small voice may be heard and felt in the hearts of our loved ones and indeed all hurting hearts everywhere.

Hear us Lord as we pray for the brokenness and hurt of our world. For the environment that we have wrestled into submission instead of nurtured into blessing. For the engines of war that we have nourished with our ever growing industries of swords and shields.

O God our help in ages past, our only hope for years to come save us from ourselves. O Lord come in Your power and heal our world from the warfare that causes such suffering and generational grief and illness. Especially we pray for Your end to come to the war in Ukraine. Bring Your Peace which passes all our human understanding we pray.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, be thou our guard while troubles last, and our eternal home. Amen.

Hymn: - 328 This is my Father's world

Benediction

Announcements for July 24th

1. **Birthdays at Westminster:** Bev Stewart - Monday, July 25th, Brendan Wilson - Tuesday, July 26th, Andrew Wilson - Wednesday, July 27th. May they be blessed with many wonderful gifts on their birthdays.
2. **Children's Choir!** Westminster is going to start a children's choir for the community. We are very excited about this adventure! We are looking for 7 year olds and up who love to sing. Start date is Thursday, September 15th at 6:30pm. The expectations for singing in the Westminster service are once every four or five weeks. The choir would not be expected to sing in the worship service every week. Please contact me, Charlene Wilson, Peter Scoffield or Westminster Church if you know someone who would like to be part of this.
3. **A Celebration of Life:** Will be held for Betty Carscadden at Westminster Church on Saturday, July 30th at 10:30am. Reception to follow at the Delta at 11:30am and Committal at 1pm at Greenwood. All are welcome to attend.

Prayers – Taken From Wednesday May 25, 2022

Praise Reports

Julie has recuperated from her heart attack and is doing well.

Ariahna has recovered completely from Covid and her joyful spirit has not be subdued by the choking she experienced. She still continues to smile.

An OES puppy that was lost on March 14th because of the explosions when the family was fleeing from Mariupol has been found in Mariupol alive and doing well.

Prayers

We will begin by praying for the families involved in the shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. The number of dead is now 21.

This evening, Lord, as children have come home from another day at school, we pray for those parents whose children did not come home yesterday.

Like Rachel, we mourn, we cry out in grief, our voices join others in lamentations, for the children who went to school yesterday for the last time.

And we ask, how many more must die, how many more families must be torn apart before something is done, before people open their eyes, and see that change must happen.

Grant comfort to the grieving, Lord, wisdom to the law-makers. May we never again wake up to news of the death of innocents. - Katherine Burgess

We continue to pray for congregations of Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian church and Geneva Presbyterian church of Laguna Woods, California as one person was killed and five were wounded last Sunday during the Taiwanese service. Lord, may they look to you for strength and may they find comfort in your word.

We pray for those who were involved in the shooting in the Buffalo store a week ago. Be with those who are grieving and those who are injured. May they heal well and not live in fear, but in your strength. May they not feel forgotten as the next tragedy has happened.

We pray for all of those who lost so much in the tornadoes that went through Gaylord and Ontario. We pray for those who lost loved ones. Be with them in their grief. It is hard to believe that a storm could do so much damage and create so much chaos. Help those who are trying to sort out the mess and put people's lives back together. We also pray for those who are still without power. May they have what they need and may their lives return to normal soon.

We pray for those families that were connected to the plane that went down two months ago. Lord, we know that it was not the ending that they wanted but at least they will know what happened. Be with the families.

Pray for those who are suffering and working through mental health issues. We particularly pray for a person who is struggling again with depression and feelings of negative self worth. Be with him, Lord. Help him to see he is worthy because he is loved. Lord help us to listen and care, be with all who are suffering.

Lord we lift up those dealing with cancer.

- We pray for Melinda's, Uncle Ronny, who is waiting for a space at Arch. Be with the his wife and family as they wait. May they all know your comfort and care at this time.
- We pray for Charlotte, and for Peter's sister-in-law. We pray for Grayson, he has battled for two years now and we pray he beats this disease.
- We pray for a gentleman who was diagnosed a few weeks ago and ask for Your Comfort and Peace in that family as they await news of a treatment plan and prognosis.
- Lord may all battling cancer receive good care, comfort and peace.

We continue to pray for Charity who had spinal surgery. She is home now but feeling a little overwhelmed. Lord, we pray that she will be able to manage her prescriptions and look after herself until she has some help on Friday. Be with her, Lord.

We pray for a young mother who is in need of your comfort and care at this time.

We pray for Mary Anne, a business colleague of Melinda, whose husband has to have open heart surgery in Sudbury. Be with them as they wait for a date, Lord, and give them courage to face this event.

We pray for a mother named Melissa whose husband died very suddenly and she is left with two young children ages 4 and 6. She is struggling. Lord, please place people around her who are able to help. We pray that she will turn to you, Lord, for strength and comfort.

We lift up Les Dool and pray for complete healing from shingles.

We pray for Jackie in his ongoing health struggles.

We continue to pray Emily Michaud as she recovers from her broken ankle.

We pray for Emily's friend who is in need of an apartment for June 1st. Help her, Lord, to find a place to live.

We pray for Josie in her ongoing rehab and pray for restoration to good health.

Lord, may all of these folks be healed and have comfort and know God's Presence

We pray for Susan's nephew Derek who is participating in a 50km cycling event in Toronto on Saturday. May he have safety on his ride and may he do well at raising funds for youth mental health.

We pray for Carol and Adam Lord, please give Carol wisdom and perseverance in this relationship with her son. Help Adam to receive insight from You Lord.

We thank you, Lord, that we are able to bring all of these concerns and requests to you.
Amen